

NOTES ON THE GULF OF MEXICO ALLIANCE REGIONAL RESTORATION
COORDINATION TEAM STATE-LEAD "ROUND ROBIN" WORKSHOP
GALVESTON, TEXAS
MAY 22-24, 2006

MAY 22, -- TEXAS

Woody Woodrow with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and **Tom Calnan** with the Texas General Land Office welcomed everyone to the meeting. **Mr. Calnan** provided an overview of State agency responsibilities in Texas that are involved with coastal and habitat restoration. Agencies involved in such work include:

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department – www.tpwd.state.tx.us

Texas General Land Office – www.glo.state.tx.us

Texas Coastal Management Program -- <http://www.glo.state.tx.us/coastal/cmp.html>

Texas Council on Environmental Quality – www.tceq.state.tx.us

Texas Railroad Commission – www.rrc.state.tx.us

Texas Water Development Board – www.twdb.state.tx.us

Following introductions, presentations were made on issues of importance in Texas coastal restoration efforts. All presentations will be posted on the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Working Website. The URL for that website is:

<http://www2.nos.noaa.gov/gomex/restoration/welcome.html>

Jim Gibeaut, with the University of Texas, Bureau of Economic Geology, spoke on sea level rise and coastal wetlands change.

John Jacob, with Sea Grant, spoke on Habitat and Development on the Texas Coast. He cited projections that 4 million people will be coming to Houston, and issues of development are very important as well as preservation efforts. Density of population can help. By increasing population in a particular area, it reduces the amount of open land that is needed to accommodate increasing populations. The message needs to be that quality of life is connected to nature.

Woody Woodrow with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department provided an overview of habitat issues. He said that only 1 percent of coastal prairie remains from pre-settlement days. He discussed the conservation status of estuarine wetlands, riparian wetlands, acquisition programs, and regulatory issues. He said that in Texas about 60 percent of riparian wetlands have been lost. He said that stakeholders need to actively engage in conservation.

Beau Hardegree with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service spoke on Sea Grass Status and Trends, State-wide Issues, and Restoration Work. Some of the state-wide issues impact sea grasses. Dredging, nutrient loading, motor-boat propeller scarring, and navigation channels are some examples. He said that in Texas a Sea Grass Plan was signed by all of

the State agencies responsible for sea grass resources. It covered a broad array of topics including resources, management, and outreach. Factors affecting sea grass conservation include 1) inability to implement a sustained State-wide monitoring plan; 2) lack of funding in the State agencies; and 3) loss of key personnel.

Jan Stokes replaced Carolyn Murphy with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers as speaker, and she spoke on the Interagency Cooperation Teams. **Ms. Stokes** said the teams began in 1990. They include State and Federal agency representation. The goal is consensus. The progress is done in work groups—subsets of the ICT. The ICT meetings are open to the public.

The question was asked if this could be used across the Gulf. **Ms. Stokes** said there is a lot of autonomy in the individual districts, and it is up to those Districts to adopt the process if they so choose. **Larry Parson** said the Mobile District has a similar program.

Eddie Seidensticker with the U. S. Department of Agriculture spoke on Beneficial Uses Groups (BUG's). He talked about the Houston-Galveston Navigation Channel Project. It started as a part of the ICT process. For more information on that project, go to www.betterbay.org.

Stephanie Gambino with the Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service gave a presentation on the CIAP and GOMESA programs.

She discussed the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and the Coastal Impact Assistance Program. Funding is available from 2007 to 2010. More information is available on the website at www.mms.gov. Each year's allocations are based on offshore oil and gas revenues. Sixty-five percent of the total for each State stays within the State and 35 percent goes to the coastal political systems. She described the five authorized uses of the funding:

- Projects and activities for the conservation, protection, or restoration of coastal areas, including wetland.
- Mitigation of damage to fish, wildlife, or natural resources.
- Planning assistance and the administrative costs of complying with this section.
- Implementation of a federally-approved marine, coastal or comprehensive conservation management plan.
- Mitigation of the impact of Outer Continental Shelf activities through funding or onshore infrastructure projects and public service needs.
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Ms. Gambino said a draft of the program announcement should go out at www.grants.gov in October. Hopefully they will start accepting grant applications thereafter.

For the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA), she pointed out the differences between it and CIAP. The time period for GOMESA is 2007 to 2055. It only involves the Gulf of Mexico producing states. Funding goes 80 percent to the States and 20 percent to coastal political systems. There is a limit on administrative costs.

Ray Newby spoke on the Texas Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act Program (CEPRA). It was developed to create a revenue source for matching funds among Federal and State and local agencies as well as non-profit organizations. It is a two-year funding cycle.

Mr. Newby referred to the BUDM (Beneficial Uses of Dredged Materials)—challenges faced include constraints within U. S. Army Corps of Engineers regulations, navigation priorities, etc. There have been some advances within the Corps such as the annual dredging conference, ICT's, and a coastal wetlands data base.

John Huffman with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service spoke on the USFWS Coastal Program. The program is about voluntary partnerships for coastal conservation programs. They partner with coastal communities to improve the health of watersheds for fish, wildlife, and people. The USFWS provides financial and technical assistance. Their program is partnership driven and eco-system based. It is a non-regulatory program and it is proactive. It is a direct assistance program. The funding is open all year as long as they have funds remaining. Funding is available to the State, Federal agencies, non-profit groups, NGO's, and private landowners. They have approximately \$600,000 annually along the Texas Coast. USFWS is able to provide technical assistance in the form of grant-writing, project development, and planning. More information is available at: <http://cooperativeconservation.gov>.

It was pointed out that the GOM Alliance has a need for information-sharing Gulf-wide for coastal restoration. We need to demonstrate where the needs are, and then see what the Coastal Program can do to help.

Ray Allen with the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program spoke on priorities, impediments and conservation. The mission of his organization is the protection of the bays and estuaries in the Coastal Bend. They cover 75 miles of estuaries along the South Central Texas coast, and 1,260 miles of shoreline. They have local funding partners, and have used a bottom-up approach. Priority issues include human uses, freshwater inflows, habitat loss, water and sediment quality, and public outreach. One of the impediments is getting people on the same track on how to manage the resources.

Helen Drummond with the Galveston Bay Estuary Program spoke on priorities, impediments, and conservation in Galveston Bay area. She talked about collaborative partnerships. They have the second most productive fishery in the United States. It encompasses 5 counties and 30 cities and towns. Their area brings in one-third of the Texas commercial fishing income. Galveston Bay is threatened by pollution, development, and overuse. Cost of restoration is increasing rapidly (\$13,000 per acre on recent projects.) They have a 41-member council made up of citizens, local governments, nonprofits, Federal and State agencies, academic institutions, and marinas—basically anyone with a stake in Galveston Bay.

Jeff Raasch with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department spoke on landowner restoration incentives. He described the Texas Farm Bill Conservation Incentive Program, the

Wetland Restoration Program, and the Wildlife Habitat Restoration Program, among others. He also spoke about the Gulf Coast Joint Venture. It is a partnership having to do with bird conservation plans and bird habitat joint ventures. The JV does biological planning and prioritization, project development and implementation, monitoring, applied research, communications and outreach, and fundraising for projects and other activities. The JV management board is made up of wildlife agencies, Federal agencies, State agencies, nonprofits, and private landowner representatives.

A question was raised about including Mexico in the JV. For water fowl, the JV will stop at the border. For the other species it will be referred to the Rio Grande Joint Venture which is a bi-national effort that includes participation from Tamaulipas.

Woody Woodrow gave a presentation on project-specific government policy and funding issues. He described some of the barriers within the governmental entities to implementing restoration projects in the field. State funding is an issue—trying to come up with the non-Federal match that is required. No funding program in Texas is delegated for habitat conservation and wetland restoration. They cannot own land so they have to find someone, like an NGO, who can own the land for conservation easements.

Mr. Woodrow said they would like to see some collaboration and coordination among the Federal Agencies and also among the various State agencies. They would like to see all the money go into one project in order to make a difference rather than spending it among several projects. He feels there is a lack of adequate communication among groups.

Jim Bergen with The Nature Conservancy spoke on Conservation without Borders or Fences: TNC and the Western Gulf of Mexico. He is Director of Science and Stewardship with the TNC. He said in 2002, they developed an eco-regional conservation program. This was done in partnership with Pronatura. The TNC is interested in working in Mexico with its huge levels of bio-diversity. Mexico has 10 percent of all major species of animals on the planet. They have the highest number of reptiles, second-highest in mammals, and fourth in amphibians. Mexico has 30 percent more species of birds than the United and Canada combined. He discussed the Laguna Madre in Texas and Tamaulipas. Threats to conservation in Mexico include complicated social and political conditions, unsustainable use of natural resources, loss and fragmentation of habitat.

Mr. Bergen discussed the private lands conservation program in Tamaulipas which covers almost 90,000 acres. Lessons learned include planning and strategizing together, and need for good communication. He said that little investments can make a big difference with partners in Mexico.

He said that some of the TNC issues for the 2016 initiative include: climate change, protected areas, sustainable harvests, ecosystem services, infrastructure, etc.

Dr. Dokken thanked **Tom Calnan**, **Woody Woodrow**, and **Kendal Keyes** for all of their efforts in arranging for the speakers. He also thanked his staff for pulling things together and the Gulf of Mexico Program for their support for the RRCT effort. He said it is amazing how much is being done in conservation and restoration, and yet we still are losing ground. We need to come together in partnerships to make these efforts successful.

MAY 23—MEXICO

Dr. Dokken and **C. Leon** welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the representatives from Mexico. **Dr. Dokken** said we will explore ways to collaborate together in coastal and habitat restoration in the Gulf of Mexico. There is a possibility for future interaction at the GOM Alliance RRCT meeting in Florida in August. He then introduced **Josefina Murietta** and **Jorge Avila**, who are with Governor Herrera's office in Veracruz. **Dr. Dokken** said that Governor Herrera was a keynote speaker at the Harte Research Institute Summit last March. Dr. Dokken has visited Rafael Arias on the Governor's staff, and he has expressed much interest in being involved in a Gulf-wide alliance.

Mr. Leon said today's session will be devoted to Mexico's Gulf of Mexico efforts. He thanked all of his Mexican colleagues for coming to the meeting.

Cuauhtemoc Leon spoke on Mexican GOM in Context and Restoration Efforts. He reminded everyone that the Gulf of Mexico involves three countries. We can all learn and share our experiences and knowledge. We hope to open a different kind of relationship beyond Federal governments or academia. We hope to build a new relationship that includes NGO's and local government officials.

Mr. Leon said the Gulf of Mexico is an ocean nation. The Mexican part of the GOM also is divided into states. He showed the eco-regions that the two countries have. The diversity is more in Mexico than in the United States. He showed populations in the larger cities around the GOM in the three countries by eco-region. He gave as an example--Cancun County. That county's population increase in the last 10 years has been almost ¼ million. However, in that same time period, a similar county in Florida actually decreased in population, so the dynamics are changing. He said we need to make deep changes in how we do development. We need to restore the system and create new policies in how we develop lands. He referenced the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands homepage, www.ramsar.org. **Mr. Leon** said that website shows restoration definitions. He believes the Mexican definition of restoration is different from the U.S. definition. We need to have a better understanding of each other in terms of restoration.

At this conference, we will see some of the Federal activities linked to restoration issues, and we will hear about work by NGO's, and we will also hear about academia efforts as well.

Alejandro Yañez with NECOL spoke on New Trends for Restoring Wetlands: Coastal Zone Scale in the GOM-LME. He began by thanking the Gulf of Mexico Foundation for inviting him to the bi-national meeting. He discussed environmental sustainability in the Gulf of Mexico. He referred to key issues such as climate change, loss of wetlands, and an energy crisis. He pointed out similar demographics in the United States and Mexico in the GOM. Over 49 million people live in the five Gulf States in the United States, and in Mexico 15 million people live in the six Gulf States. There are, of course, also many differences, but the same concerns about the GOM in both countries. We have a shared eco-system. It is one of the most important systems in the terms of economy and ecological points of view.

Some of the major causes of wetlands loss include barrier island degradation, storms, salt water intrusion, land-use changes, subsidence, and sea level change. He said that 75 percent of coastal wetlands have been lost in the United States and over 60 percent in Mexico between the years 1950 to 2000. He pointed out that oil resources in Mexico will be finished in no more than 25 years and climate change is increasing. He said that use of wetlands for waste water treatment is new in Mexico. **Mr. Yañez** said a great opportunity for working together in the Gulf of Mexico across borders is the Mississippi Delta System functions, and ecological acreage modeling and monitoring are essential in developing adaptive management practices. We should design some type of instrument that will enable us to work together on problems in the coastal zone and in wetlands. He said that perhaps through the auspices of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation we can develop a mechanism to work together in both countries.

Porfirio Álvarez, with SEMARNAT, spoke on The Mexican Strategy for the Sustainable Management of Seas and Coasts. He said that the Mexican government is interested in on-the-ground projects. For the last 10 or 20 years there has been much talk about integrated coastal zone management, but so far these discussions have not been put into place on-the-ground. Since we have been working more closely together over the last two years, there is more progress. He said SEMARNAT's task as a planning commission is to align the different organizational efforts to work on the environment in Mexico. He said the Environmental Policy for Oceans and Coasts Program was started three years ago. For GOM efforts in Mexico, boundary issues are very important. He said they have a National Association of Municipalities that is involved in the local land-use planning efforts. They also have a national strategy for the physical land and sea use in oceans and coastal areas, and it has been committed to by President Calderon. It outlines the way forward for the next 20 years. He described some of the national strategies from 2006 – 2012. One is to create an inter-ministerial committee for the integrated management of oceans and coasts. That commission includes 9 Federal agencies. That commission will collaborate at the state level and come up with a document for national ocean policy. The draft of the ocean policy will be prepared in November and they hope to have it ready by December of this year.

Mr. Álvarez said they are developing a shared vision at the national level. They use public participation with the bottom-up approach. They will increase networking and

institutional framework. They will be monitoring environmental changes. The JEFF committee says it is going to develop a regional technical advisory group. Sea Grant member John Jacob and others are involved on the steering committee. **Dr. Dokken** said he would like to be kept informed of what is happening and how what we are doing factors in. **Mr. Álvarez** said Mexico would like to align some of the available monies with US agency monies. **Dr. Dokken** referred **Mr. Álvarez** to the TCOON Project at TAMU-CC. He will provide him with some contacts.

Mr. Álvarez said regarding the physical planning effort, it requires public notice of meetings and it is necessary to invite stakeholders. They use surveys for input. At the local level, they deal directly with the authorities. Some of them have already started some of the physical planning process. Interaction at all levels of government is a part of the regulatory framework.

Mónica Herzig, with CONANP, spoke on International Commitments and Restoration Actions by CONANP, CONAFOR, and CONABIO. She reviewed various environmental issues surrounding the National Protected Areas Program. Under SEMARNAT there are three sub-ministries subdivided into smaller units. They are CONANP, CONAFOR, and CONABIO. She said it is hard to keep up with what is going on in all of the various ministries. She gave the web address for SEMARNAT: www.semarnat.gob.mx. She said they have been charged with developing a National Environmental and Natural Resources Information System. She said that between 2003 and 2007, Mexico has added 59 wetlands to the Ramsar list with over 5 million hectares. More than two-thirds of those sites are in the Gulf of Mexico. There are numerous agencies interested in wetlands restoration, and there are many gray areas in responsibility. Mismanagement of watersheds that flow in to the Gulf of Mexico creates population problems in Mexico similar to that in the United States.

Claudia Agraz, University de Campeche, spoke on Available Options to Restore Mangrove Forest in the Terminos Lagoon, Campeche, Mexico. She discussed the program they have for conservation and restoration.

Alfonso Banda with Pronatura spoke on Specific Lessons: Community-Level and Productive Restoration. His office is in Matamoras and they work in the Laguna Madre. They work with restoration, community development, and other efforts. He talked about wetlands restoration. The Laguna Madre is a bi-national eco-system. He showed several of the projects where they have been doing wetlands restoration work. Funding for some of the projects comes from NAWCA, some from State governments, and some from Pronatura and CONABIO.

Mr. Banda spoke of the ejidos. There is a form of land ownership in Mexico that involves ejidos, which allows groups of people to petition for access to resources they previously did not have access to. Overall, each household in the community has the right to exploit resources necessary for its livelihood. Each community allocates a certain portion of its resources to individual households who manage these resources within the guidelines set by the community. Beyond these limits, a household can use its resources

as it sees fit, though the allocated resources may not be sold or rented to anyone outside of the community. The sense of ownership instilled by this system creates incentives to invest in the land and manage it efficiently. They were created at the beginning of the last century. One of the concerns in working with the ejidos is that there are many that do not have secure sources of income. One of the objectives of Pronatura is to try to protect the environment in concert with society and its needs. They have done such things as creating jobs for plant production and for other environmental activities. Mexican land ownership has four different kinds: private land, Federal land, the ejidos, and the communes such as in Chiapas. There has now been a change in the National Constitution that allows them to sell their land.

Cecilia Blasco spoke on the Mexican Fund for the Conservation of Nature's Gulf of Mexico Program. She described FONDO. It is a private non-profit institution that had its origin in 1992. They are the link between the money and the conservation on the ground. She told of their funding sources, such as the Government of Mexico, USAID, and several foundations. They have four main areas of focus: protected areas conservation program; fire management and restoration program; cities and watersheds program; marine conservation program. She also mentioned the Mexican Conservation Learning Network (IMAC). Every year they have an open call for requests for funds for conservation projects throughout the world. They are usually small projects that no one else is funding.

Ms. Blasco said PEMEX approached them to pull some money into the restoration and conservation of coastal wetlands in the areas where PEMEX works. Twenty percent of the funding goes to environmental education about those projects. They are focusing on sites identified by CONABIO. There will be an annual call for proposals. A committee will select the projects and oversee the program. Projects will be 12-24 months, and in the \$80,000 - \$250,000 price range. They will be merit based; hopefully they will include leveraging some other funds, and they must be results-oriented.

Some of the topics to be covered will include eco-system and hydrologic cycle conservation and/or restoration, invasive species control, endangered species protection, climate change mitigation, etc. The money is not to be used for remediation. For more information, go to www.fmcn.org. FONDO hopes to find ways to work with all of the partners in the region.

Eduardo Cota, with Pronatura, spoke on A Strategic Ally in the GOM Conservation. The Pronatura mission is conservation of flora, fauna, and a healthy ecosystem. He described the large number of projects they work on in Mexico. They were first in Mexico to do conservation of private lands to create private reservations. They have partners like the Nature Conservancy and Bird Life International. **Mr. Cota** said when representatives of Pronatura met with **Mr. Leon** and the Gulf of Mexico Foundation representatives earlier this year and heard about the GOM Alliance RRCT meeting, they saw the importance of attending and exploring the many commonalities in both countries with regard to conservation and restoration of wetlands. They have an education

outreach program with youth. They are very interested in eco-regional planning in the Gulf of Mexico area.

Mr. Cota said perhaps the universities and the NGO's can work to engage Cuba in this process since it is such a difficult situation for governments to work with Cuba. If we want to conserve all of the Gulf of Mexico, we need a strategic alliance in USA and Mexico. He would like to see Pronatura collaborating with this group.

One of the major programs is the River of Raptors Program. They have four or five million raptors. They have an education program about the raptors. They work in the schools and outside. In schools, they promote interest in raptors to the young people and they take the students to the field.

Monica Herzig said there are dividends for local communities who have decided to set aside lands for conservation. An agreement is signed with those communities and they are given a certificate—the government does not actually buy the land. She said there is a need in Mexico to consolidate things. She said it is important to have management in the region that can continue with the efforts. The Natural Protected Areas Commission has a staff of 5 – 9 in each of the protected areas. Those people could oversee some of this effort.

Dr. Dokken introduced **Maria Araujo** with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. She is the coordinator for international affairs. She spoke on TPWD/Mexico Cooperative Conservation/Restoration Efforts. **Ms. Araujo** said there are 10 different divisions at TPWD, and it is up to them if they need assistance on a bi-national issue. They are getting a lot of invitations to go to conferences, for example. They have state-agency border working groups; the Border Governors Conference which has a number of committees, and a wildlife working group. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the wildlife liaison from Mexico are at all of the working group meetings. There are also groups such as the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Tri-lateral Meeting for Wildlife Restoration, and the Monarch Butterfly Flyway Group. **Ms. Araujo** said previously the Mexican States had no responsibility for wildlife management, but that changed in 1994. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is working with the border states on wildlife surveys, evaluations, and new methodologies are being used. Workshops are being held to train employees and the border states are welcome to send people to those workshops. They also do a Train the Trainers workshop.

Ms. Araujo said the Tri-lateral Committee evolved from a bi-national effort. The Tri-lateral Committee has terms of office, and when a State calls a particular meeting, they can do whatever they want. There are heads of delegations there, and the coordinators and directors of wildlife for the United States, Canada, and Mexico. When a matter is discussed, one has to give a specific proposal and these high-level delegates will consider it and respond.

The question was asked as to when the Tri-lateral Committee meets? **Ms Araujo** said it is scheduled to meet next year in May. It will be Mexico's turn to host it, and it probably

will be held in Veracruz. **Ms. Araujo** said she will email the URL's for these different forums.

Dr. Dokken said that on the Alliance, NOAA and EPA have taken the lead on moving the Alliance goals forward. He mentioned the Gulf Guardian Awards that are hosted by the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program. It is a prestigious award and it is bi-national. He encouraged people, particularly from Mexico, to send in nominations.

Carl Ferraro asked if the Education and Outreach Working Group is making similar efforts in collaboration between the United States and Mexico. **Dr. Dokken** said he is co-chairing the Education Outreach Working Group for the International Committee. The objective is to make the general population aware of issues in the Gulf of Mexico. Wetlands for the Future is a DOI program which provides for training and education at the community level by providing training materials, education and outreach assistance, etc. In Mexico there are similar parallels in terms of education and outreach. There is the Ministry of Education and the center associated with SEMARNAT—a training center for sustainable development. They do have outreach programs. They are concentrating their efforts right now on watersheds.

Randy Runnels said we need to tie together the resource management personnel and academia within the two countries. It was pointed out that NGO's have an easier time working cross-borders. **Tom Calnan** asked what commitments came out of the HRI Summit in relation to the GOM Alliance? **Dr. Dokken** said there were no agreements or action items that came out of it. However, Governor Herrera has taken great interest in the idea of the Alliance and the GOM Summit. They would like to have the next Summit in Veracruz. At the July Alliance meeting in Florida, Mr. Rafael Arias from the Governor's staff may make a presentation on the matter.

Dr. Dokken and **Mr. Leon** said they will be participating next week in a roundtable of municipalities in Coatzacoalcas to talk about establishing linkages at the municipal government level. This should be extended out further to the general populous.

Dr. Dokken has been offered the opportunity to speak at the conference of city managers in the United States, and that would be his topic—about linking areas from Cancun to Key West.

Lynn Martin mentioned that at the Summit there was a discussion on community response after storms. That could be another activity we could do bi-nationally. Human health and safety are key issues all around the Gulf of Mexico.

Dr. Dokken said tomorrow there will be an update on the Regional Sediment Master Plan. Then there will be a discussion period where we work on how to move the GOM Alliance Governors Action Plan forward. We will also focus on the action agenda that this group was formed to address. A lot of them relate to policy, SOP's about permitting, and also about funding. The State Leads said they have some questions that will need to be addressed at a higher level.

Mr. Leon thanked everyone for their participation. He also thanked the GOM Foundation for allowing the Mexican interaction. He said the Mexicans anticipate having several meetings throughout the year in Mexico about these issues and the Alliance agenda. At the next meeting, hopefully there will be some good news on how to have a working group on the restoration efforts.

MAY 24—Implementing the Governors' Action Plan

Dr. Dokken opened the meeting by thanking **Tom Calnan, Woody Woodrow, Kendal Keyes** and **C. Leon** for their efforts in coordinating the agenda for the Texas and Mexico days. He congratulated each of the speakers on both days on their presentations, and especially for the Mexican representatives who were willing to speak in English.

Larry Parson, USACE, gave an Update on the Regional Sediment Master Plan. He provided an overview of the plan. It is an implementation action that is part of the Governors Action Plan. He pointed out that sediment is a regional resource. We have to change the practice of how sediment is managed to a regional scale rather than being project specific. His group has been holding monthly conference calls. The next one will be on June 7. They started with a strawman document which was sent out for comments. It was discussed and finalized at the RRCT meeting in New Orleans. However, the Corps is still open to receiving comments.

The next document was a working plan to outline the tasks and develop some focus areas to generate the master plan. It has been distributed to the team for comments. The deadline for comments was May 18; however, they have not had good response.

They have also held a series of workshops. The group developed a questionnaire for the States. They have received responses from Louisiana and Alabama, and Texas plans to respond. He has not yet heard from Florida or Mississippi. The focus areas that have been developed are: policy, authorities and funding, sediment resources, data/information management, and restoration coordination. There are subgroups under those focus areas. In the next couple of months, they will be establishing subgroups for the remainder of the focus groups that have not yet been developed. Also the group needs to look at the format the master plan will take.

Dr. Dokken complimented **Mr. Parson** on the process he has been using in moving the sediment master plan forward.

Dr. Dokken provided a summary of the TX/MX workshops over the past two days. He said there were many similarities of habitat restoration challenges and needs of both countries. One is the funding issue. The end result of all of this effort is to get money and intellectual expertise into the field to restore habitat we have lost. There is never enough funding to accomplish the work. Other common issues include permitting and socio-economic matters. Public understanding and support is very important. We need

to let people know why these ecological services are important in our lives. **Dr. Dokken** said we need to set priorities for habitat restoration. **Mr. Leon** said we need to develop some kind of proposal or mechanism to take specific steps. The sharing of technological and intellectual resources should be addressed. **Dr. Dokken** said if the Foundation can help facilitate that, we would be happy to do so. **Mr. Woodrow** said they are talking about ways to work with Mexico in a more specific way.

Tom Calnan said that in New Orleans and Mobile there was a predominance of hurricane and coastal hazards discussions. In those areas, the hurricane emphasis is a motivating factor. In the Texas and Mexico workshops there was not much hurricane hazards talk. Another difference is that Louisiana and Mississippi have large-scale restoration plans, and we do not have those in Texas. During our sessions we did not look at specific projects. Some of that was done during the field trip for State Reps. at the beginning of the week. He concluded that there are a lot of similarities but also a lot of differences among the States.

Randy Runnels said we need to be thinking about where we are going after the individual State by State workshops are finished. There will be a much more detailed process later on. He said that perhaps we should publicize visits to some of the individual sites that are reflective of restoration efforts. We should try to instill enthusiasm and support for this work in each of the States. **Dr. Dokken** said the public relations and marketing end of this is very important as it creates the emotional connection to the restoration efforts. **Mr. Runnels** said he has spoken to the Public Affairs people in Tallahassee to make the Florida RRCT meeting in August more high profile. **Dr. Dokken** said the new president of the Foundation, Paul Kelly, is active on the Ocean Commission, and it may be that we can bring in some high-profile people through that avenue.

Another suggestion that was made was to create a list-serve to make an electronic discussion forum. The Coastal Services Center may be a resource for that effort. Also, if we can link with organizations such as Sea Grant that would help us get the word out. Sea Grant will offer to help facilitate the electronic interaction. **Chris David** pointed out that NOAA has a website set up for this working group and all the documents that come out of these meetings are posted to it. They have a capability for creating a list-serve. It was pointed out that the Corps of Engineers in Galveston is doing an inventory of its projects. It will be in the TGLO data base, and there will be all kinds of information about the individual Corps of Engineers sites. Site visits could be done whenever someone is visiting in an area. Continuous communication is important. **Chris David** said he can put links on the working group website to such places as TGLO and Corps of Engineers electronic data bases.

Governors Action Plan Items:

Dr. Dokken said that the plan is very specific about what needs to be addressed. He reviewed the plan in order for everyone to be able to refocus and see where we need to be at the end of this entire process.

R1-2. **Dr. Dokken** needs this kind of input from each of the State Reps. as to what is happening in each State. Plus we need to know where the State priorities are.

R1-3. A separate grant has been given to Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to work on this item. **Mr. Woodrow** said there has been a conference call to develop a steering committee with the other 5 States. They still do not have the contract signed by EPA yet. **Mr. Woodrow** will keep the RRCT informed on progress.

R1-4. **Dr. Dokken** said we can identify issues and suggest ways to resolve the issues, but a lot of these issues take legislative action, and public review and comment. We need to focus on these issues.

R1-5. We need to know what the impediments are. Thus far, we have not heard a lot about impediments. The group may not feel that there are any major problems.

R1-6. The amount of paperwork that is required of recipients is always an issue.

R1-7. How do we encourage landowners to involve themselves in conservation projects? This is also a socio-economic issue.

R1-8. **Larry Parson** and his working group from Corps of Engineers are doing a good job focusing on this issue.

R1-9. **Dr. Dokken** said we need to pull the data out where people can see it. He said we will be working with the Bureau of the Census and the NOAA Population data base to compile that information.

R2. **Dr. Dokken** said this is not built into the GOMF contract with EPA but it is critical. Dr. Susan Rees with the Corps of Engineers made an excellent presentation at the last workshop we held. They have some good modeling techniques they are using in projecting storm hazards. **Mr. Calnan** said the R-2 issues need to be factored into R-1. He pointed out that a healthy coastal ecosystem equals increased safety. The Louisiana State plan has changed over time to provide that kind of emphasis. Global warming is becoming an issue, also.

Mr. Benson said that when we meet in July in St. Petersburg there is a sub-team being assembled that will meet with us in July. This will provide us an opportunity to address the R-2.

Mr. Calnan said that Louisiana has been able to come back with large amounts of funding by capturing the interest of its congressional delegation. **Dr. Dokken** said NGO's may be able to use their networks to push for that kind of congressional support. A pressing issue should be to better understand sea level change around the Gulf.

The Gulf of Mexico Foundation sent out a questionnaire to the State Reps. to start collecting the answers and proposing specific recommendations to the action plan items in R1. **Dr. Dokken** is looking for a short, concise, bulleted response to those questions. To date, no responses have been received.

Overall Gulf of Mexico Alliance Concerns:

The question was asked, how will our items be converted into policy changes?

Dr. Dokken said we are not the group to answer such questions, but we can push them up the line to the Governors' offices and the State governments. **Mr. Runnels** said we can be more effective if we know what the rules are. We need communication with those in charge. **Dr. Dokken** said NOAA and EPA are working hard at the headquarters level, and the State Leads meet together, but it is not tied together and information is not disseminated down to the working groups.

The Alliance Management Team's concept is to hold annual meetings each year like the one coming up in St. Petersburg in July. **Mr. Runnels** said there should be vision and driving force. We need higher-level buy-in at the State level.

Mr. Woodrow asked how our recommendations get translated into something real. We do not even know if the proposal will go up the line to the Governor's office in each State, for example. There needs to be a process in place.

John Bowie said he thinks the July meeting will make things a lot clearer. We need to go through the State Leads for this team, but also the State Leads for the overall Alliance. **Mr. Calnan** said we have 5 States working together on concerns. If we all agree on those concerns, that should have some clout. The concern is that we are always fighting the battle within our own agencies for support and commitment. We do not have communication from the Alliance State Leads and with changes in the Governors' offices, this needs to be on the radar screen. We need to have some assurance that all of this work will make a difference.

Drew Puffer said that Phil Bass indicated that the Governors of the Gulf States were supposed to get together on this. **Mr. Bowie** said that Mr. Bass has met with some of the States already. He met with TCEQ—Buddy Garcia, Bruce Moulton, Larry McKinney and the Deputy Director of TGLO. He is trying to keep the support going. His next meeting will probably be with the Alabama representatives. In June, there will be the Southern Governors Association meeting, and they will try to have a session on the Alliance there.

The need to have representation from each State at these RRCT meetings was pointed out. For example, although we have 10 people here from Mexico, we do not have representation from Louisiana or Mississippi. **Dr. Dokken** will talk to those States about their State representation at these meetings.

Should the State Leads work up a list that they want to test?

There are some things already happening. The sea level change issue, for example. Perhaps we should find out who those people are and get them talking. If we have a half day for the Caribbean speakers at the August meeting, perhaps we can address that item of subsidence and sea level rise at the August meeting. They could get together and identify the products that they have available and how we can use some of those assets. **Dr. Dokken** asked **Mr. Runnels** to take the lead on the sea level change issue that the State Reps. have expressed an interest in.

Regarding the R2 issues, who in Mexico would want to be involved in that discussion as well in terms of sediments, sea level change, subsidence, etc.? Is there interest in Mexico in interaction?

Mr. Yañez talked about the vision in Mexico. He said they are still looking at the Gulf of Mexico as three isolated pieces. We need to be taking a holistic view of the Gulf. We do not have a clear understanding of degradation and sources of pollution in the Gulf. The climate change effect, the future of oil and gas exploration in the Gulf, and the restoration problem we are well aware of, but we do not have integrated answers on the causes of these problems for the whole Gulf. Gulf-wide we need data on sediment budgets, fresh water inflows, harvest rates, etc. However, as **Dr. Dokken** points out, we cannot sit back and wait for the best possible action. We need to start now.

Randy Runnels said we will start work on the technical part of the R2 question, and we need to keep our associates from Mexico involved in the process.

With regard to the regional sediment master plan, it also requires that it be a federally lead project. The co-Federal leads on that are the USGS and the Corps of Engineers, but they have gotten a lot of help from the States as well. All the working documents are posted on the working group website.

Mr. Leon said he thinks we accomplished one of the goals that were discussed in Biloxi. In Mexico there has been change at the Federal Government level. Now that the new Federal Administration is up and running, the agenda of restoration is being worked on. He feels that the Mexican contingent learned a lot at this meeting, and they have been exploring some specific steps in Mexico and at the next meeting they will be able to say what they have been doing. They prefer to have these discussions at the meetings and face to face. He thanked everyone for being included in the meetings and said he would like to keep this going informally.

Dr. Dokken said he is very gratified at the results of the last few days. **Mr. Leon** has been tremendously helpful in setting up meetings and avenues of communication for discussing conservation and working together with the Gulf of Mexico as a regional ecosystem. How do we make this happen? The only way to establish meaningful long-term collaboration and relationships is consistent, continuous communication. It is incumbent upon each of us to put forth that effort.

Monica Herzig said that if you do not have some kind of focal point that has some sort of permanence and stability in the country, the effort loses steam. She said we should have a well-established NGO or a consultant that is hired on a permanent basis to be the central contact. **Carl Ferraro** said the contacts we make between each other are most important—friendships and communication at the staff level.

R1-6. **Kris Benson** has put some material together as a starting point for discussion. It lists four impediments:

1. Conflicting Mandates
2. Timing and administration of grants
3. Funding deficiencies
4. Funding requirements.

The suggestion was made to add reporting requirements. It was pointed out that reporting requirements will come under the Federal requirements.

Issue: Failure to implement restoration in a prioritized way and related problem of conflicting mandates within & between agencies (i.e., conflicting goals of restoring salt marsh vs. protecting Gulf Sturgeon habitat within NMFS, conflict regarding construction of cheniere ridges impacting fishery habitat).

Monica Herzig referred to the Gap Analysis to help identify areas where there is lack of information and need for information in Mexico. It has to do with protection of the national biodiversity, but it also has to do with capacity building. The Gap Analysis should be available by the end of the year. It might enter into this issue. It may come out as a SEMARNAT publication.

Impediments included piecemeal approach rather than strategic coverage. Rather than prioritizing, we need to identify efforts and funding allocations.

There was discussion on the prioritization issue. Perhaps it should be decided on a case-by-case basis. Perhaps there should be a science-based framework of criteria for selecting projects rather than prioritization.

There are conflicting mandates between the United States and Mexico as well. A project that is beneficial to one country may have an adverse impact on the other country.

It was suggested that the State Leads need to identify the true conflicting mandates.

The examples that **Kris Benson** gave on cheniere ridges impacting fishery habitat and the Gulf sturgeon issue are more a regulatory issue rather than a conflicting mandate.

With regard to the conflicting mandates and the desire to get rid of “priorities,” what do we want to change it to? **Dr. Dokken** said we need to write our explanation for why we

do not agree with prioritization. Perhaps the word “coordination” might be a better word to insert in the matrix.

Dr. Dokken said he would like to have the answers to the Gulf of Mexico Foundation questionnaire by the end of June or first part of July so that information will be available for the July meeting for discussion.

Time and administration of grants—

Issue: Failure of federal agencies to coordinate timing and administration of grants to make large-scale project implementation feasible.

Carl Ferraro suggested that the wording be improved—perhaps change the word “failure.” **Randy Runnels** said part of the problem is the evolution of large-scale projects. **Mr. Woodrow** asked if the Federal agencies coordinate with each other at the Federal level on funding for restoration projects. It would be beneficial to the States if the Federal agencies coordinated with each other rather than operating autonomously from each other. **Randy Runnels** said this is a good test issue for how the State Leads can work to effect change. This is a question to bring up from the States to the Alliance as an initiative to improve coordination at the Federal level. What interagency forums are available to begin a dialogue on this issue?

SARP (Southeast Augusta Resources Partnership)—they are focusing on five thematic areas including developing an aquatic habitat plan. It will be part of the National Fish Habitat Initiative. Perhaps there should be a meeting with SARP and the Alliance to talk about some of these issues. How does SARP overlap our efforts? The language about oversight or clearinghouse role being assigned to an interagency review team is a part of the recommendation. Perhaps we should flesh that out in more detail.

Funding deficiencies.

Issue: Insufficient investment in acquisition, management, and monitoring of coastal habitats to offset current losses. This includes failure to allocate adequate funds to existing funding mechanisms (i.e., CAP) and the need for new funding mechanisms or sources.

Dr. Dokken said NGO’s can attract money from the private sector to help leverage the Government funds available. However, we are still losing ground. **Mr. Runnels** said one thing that is not in there is that there are projects that actually work against the restoration effort. **Mr. Woodrow** said that Texas leaves a lot of Federal dollars on the table. How do the Federal Government decision-makers communicate to the States and how can the States capitalize on Federal opportunities? Lack of staff is part of the problem. How can this working group get that message up to the State hierarchy so they know they are losing money that is available?

Issue: Lack of adequate public awareness of grant opportunities for implementation of habitat conservation and restoration projects

Dr. Dokken asked if there are opportunities for partnerships with NGO's and educational institutes that can come in and manage some of these projects. Any new issues that are required to be discussed can be included in the action plan. **Dr. Dokken** said some of these issues may come out in the answers to the GOMF questionnaire. Perhaps we should lay out something like a gap analysis so that people can see what is needed.

Funding requirements

Issue: Inconsistent application among granting agencies of cost-share and matching requirements for federal funds.

This fits in with the timing and administration issue. This should not be a separate piece to address. There should be a review that encompasses all of these issues together. The question was raised as to what is desirable and what is an impediment? **Mr. Ferraro** would like to see a discussion of matching funds—why is it required? Matching requirements directly hinder some projects being conducted. He would like to see a policy come out that we should not have to have a match to get the money we send up there anyway. It was pointed out that matching requirements do get money on the table that would not have been there otherwise. These comments should be included.

Issue: Federal funding requirements (i.e., CAP) in conflict with state or local constitutional or contracting guidelines.

This issue applies mainly to Texas and sometimes in Alabama. Texas will supply the details on that.

Monica Herzig discussed what kind of funds would be required in Mexico to be doing restoration efforts on the Gulf of Mexico in Mexico. How would their process fit in with the U. S. mechanism, or will each country work inside their respective country more or less on their own? There are bi-national issues to be worked out. An example is the Jeff project. With regard to NAWCA, the United States has the right to spend a large percentage of funds for wetlands restoration in the United States, Canada gets a lesser percentage and Mexico gets the smallest. Again, there is a problem with matching funds. If we could get the matching funds from the United States, there might be more opportunity to find funds to restore the Laguna Madre and other similar systems. We need to find creative funding avenues of supporting each other in spite of the limitations each country may have. For new initiatives, Mexico would have to find creative solutions on how they can participate. Restoration efforts go forward from two motivations—opportunity and priorities. Perhaps we should incorporate a bi-national issue in the write-up. **Kris Benson** has added that to the list. It will read “meshing of bi-national funding mechanisms,” or something similar.

Chris David provided an update on the July GOM Alliance all-hands meeting.

Bill Walker will lead the meeting and there will be presentations from other Alliance team members. On the afternoon of the first day, they want us to do a prioritization exercise on the actions that are left. We can switch that around a bit. Perhaps we could use that time to talk about low-hanging fruit—actions that we think we can get done quickly. Then everyone reports back with Bill Walker and the Alliance Management Team on the second morning. From that time on, we can have our own team meeting and use it the way we see fit. Hopefully, Bill Walker will be in touch with us on what his goals for the meeting are. **Dr. Dokken** said we will have to have a conference call to discuss this in detail so we know what we are going to do at the July meeting to make it productive for our team.

Kris Benson said our next conference call will be on June 6, and the one after that will be June 20.

There is funding straight from the program for one State Lead. That person would have to do a presentation to the main committee.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 Noon.